

ADDITIONAL FEE:

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R E M A R K S

The applicant herein wishes to thank the Examiner Eric Gates for the courtesy and cooperation he extended applicant's undersigned counsel during the personal interview kindly granted on December 13, 2007. This interview was extremely helpful in expediting the prosecution of this application.

As discussed at the interview, applicant has amended claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter of claims 2 - 6, and claims 2 - 6 have been canceled.

Applicant has also amended claim 1 to recite that the convex and concave nesting portions engage along a line (line 155 shown in the attached figure, which has been copied from Figure 8 in this application) forming "a single line contact such that the end portion of the convex nesting portion extending past the line contact does not engage with the concave nesting portion and thereby causes the convex nesting portion to nest centrally in the concave nesting portion."

As the Examiner confirmed during the interview, the structure of the convex and concave nesting portions which form line engagement is not present in any of the prior art references presently of record. This structure enables the half ring elements to "self-align" as they close, a feature not present in this prior art.

Since claims 1, as now amended, recites structure which is neither shown nor suggested by the known prior art, this claim is believed to define a patentable advance over this extremely "crowded" art.

The allowance of claim 1, as well as claims 10 - 13, 23 and 24 which are dependent thereon, is respectfully requested. A formal Notice of Allowance is accordingly respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

By


Karl F. Milde, Jr.

Reg. No. 24,822

MILDE & HOFFBERG, LLP
10 Bank Street - Suite 460
White Plains, NY 10606

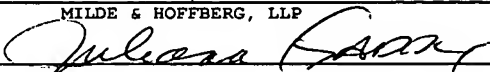
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By



Date DECEMBER 27, 2007